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Park Paid \$80,000 to Deflect Rice From U.S. Market, Transcripts Say

By Nicholas M. Horrock
New York Times News Service

Tongsun Park has told federal investigators he paid a politically prominent Louisiana rice miller \$80,000 to deflect rice from the domestic market for sale to South Korea so he could maintain his position as the key agent for the Korean government, according to transcripts of his interrogation in Seoul.

Park told a team of Justice Department lawyers he withdrew \$130,000 in cash from a secret Bahamian bank account in early 1973 and delivered \$50,000 of it to former Rep. Otto E. Passman, D-La., and \$80,000 of it to Gordon Dore (pronounced Doray) of Crowley, La.

Investigators for the House ethics committee, before which Park testified last week, are expected to concentrate on this transaction over the next few days as they attempt to unravel Park's relationship with Passman, who at that time headed a House subcommittee that directed foreign sales of surplus rice.

ACCORDING TO the transcripts, Park presented this picture of his activities:

He testified in Korea in January that he paid Passman \$200,000 under an informal \$50,000-a-year arrangement from 1972 to 1975 to use his influence with the South Korea government to keep Park as its purchasing agent for rice.

Passman, he said, was part of a group of congressmen from rice states who tried to put pressure on South Korea to buy larger amounts of rice under the foreign sales program because the terms were more favorable to American producers than were private markets.

Park told investigators that California, Mississippi, Arkansas, Texas and Louisiana "were five states who always put pressure on Koreans to buy

more rice."

He said his first contact with Louisiana political figures was in 1970 when he met Gov. Edwin W. Edwards, then a Democratic member of Congress. Edwards in turn introduced him to Passman.

In 1972, he said, he began taking a role as political contributor to Louisiana politicians. He said he had discussed a contribution for the late Sen. Allen J. Ellender with Dore, who was involved in his campaign, but Ellender's death interrupted the plan.

He testified that he contributed \$5,000 to the campaign of Rep. John B. Breaux, a Democrat who replaced Edwards in the House, through Dore. He also said that in the summer of 1972 he made political appearances in Louisiana for Passman and other Democrats, at which he said that he planned to buy rice.

The following spring, Park said, rice was a "buyers market," and he offered to pay Dore 20 cents a ton, which he said came to some \$80,000, to deflect rice to Korea.

He testified that he withdrew \$130,000 in cash from his Bahamian bank account and put it into two packages of \$50,000 and \$80,000 and flew to Louisiana. But in his Seoul testimony, Park said he could not recall whether he handed the \$80,000 to Dore directly or gave the money to Passman to give to Dore. He has testified that he did give Passman the \$50,000 part.

Government sources said federal investigators had endeavored to discover whether in fact the \$80,000 payment was solely part of a rice transaction or was used for political payments. Repeated attempts to reach Dore at his Crowley home have been unsuccessful. Joseph Alioto, Dore's lawyer, said in a recent telephone interview that his client had done nothing improper.